



Co-RIG Project

Serving Patients with Complex Needs: An LGBTQ2S+ migrant health clinic and outreach program

Project lead: Vania Jimenez, MD, CCFP, Co-founder, La Maison Bleue and Clinique Mauve

Project location: Montreal, Québec

Summary

Clinique Mauve is the first LGBTQ2S+ migrant and racialized community health clinic and outreach program in Montreal. The clinic was established to provide clinical and mental health care to patients with complex needs exacerbated by the pandemic. The interdisciplinary team includes peer navigators who build bridges with patients to support clinical care and link them to community resources. Within the first year, Clinique Mauve secured additional funding from community partners to sustain the program.

Faces of COVID-19

Supporting LGBTQ2S+ migrants

Majd is a cisgender gay refugee who became a permanent resident of Canada in 2019. Majd speaks Arabic, very little French, and is illiterate in both languages. Having been exposed to war, violence, and multiple traumas prior to arrival in Canada, his symptoms of post-traumatic stress and thoughts of suicide have increased since the pandemic lockdowns started. Majd also has insomnia, loss of appetite, and is experiencing significant pain in his right arm. He is socially isolated and is being evicted from his housing after losing his job. He connected with an Arabic speaking peer navigator who introduced him to Clinique Mauve.

The interdisciplinary care team includes a social worker, family physician, and a peer navigator. Together they assessed Majd and developed an intervention plan that includes a suicidal risk assessment, clinical care to address physical health needs, and support to stabilize his housing. Majd was also connected with a mental health worker who is helping him understand how COVID-19 public health restrictions trigger previous traumas and how to mitigate stress related to housing insecurity. Today Majd has reported fewer suicidal thoughts, has stabilized his housing, and has a plan to manage his mental and physical health.

Project detail

Many people in the migrant LGBTQ2S+ community in Montreal experience high rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, and risk for sexually transmitted infections. They also face many barriers to accessing care and services due to discrimination, social isolation, language, culture, and trauma, many of which have worsened as a result of the pandemic.

With Co-RIG funding Dr. Vania Jimenez established Clinique Mauve in Montreal with support from Dr. Pierre-Paul Tellier of McGill University, Edward Lee of the University of Montreal, and community partners.

Clinique Mauve is the first-ever community health clinic and peer navigator outreach program in Montreal for racialized, migrant, and asylum-seeking LGBTQ2S+. It is based on the model of Maison Bleue, an innovative community organization that offers services to vulnerable pregnant women. The clinic focuses on migrant LGBTQ2S+ and racialized patients who have complex needs such as untreated mental health challenges, crisis situations such as suicidal ideation, and trans individuals seeking gender affirming care.

The interdisciplinary team includes family physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, and mental health workers who collaborate to provide community-based clinical and mental health care. The addition of peer navigators, individuals with similar lived experience to the population being served, was considered particularly important to the success of the program.

Impact

- **Enhancing family medicine:** Regular meetings of the interdisciplinary team, including the peer worker, focus on the overall needs of patients, including mental health and outreach approaches. This helps identify and quickly respond to emerging patient concerns, including housing and food security resources.
- **Person-centred approach:** The peer navigator role is critical to helping build trust between patients and care providers. Recognizing language and cultural barriers between patient and care team, the peer navigator helps ensure patient needs are appropriately identified, addressed, and supported.
- **Quality improvement:** The clinic's intake protocol includes a vulnerability assessment to prioritize access for those with greatest need. It is responsive to the particular needs of LGBTQ2S+ sub-groups such as trans migrants, cis LBQ migrant women, cis GBQ migrant men, MSM, or WSW, and enables a tailored and coordinated approach to care delivery.
- **Building capacity:** Clinique Mauve has already received support from several organizations to expand their peer navigation and outreach within the LGBTQ2S+ migrant community. A thorough evaluation will serve to improve the model and encourage its adoption elsewhere in Canada.

Results to date

- LGBTQ2S+ migrant and trans diversity training provided to 50 health care personnel and community workers to enable them to be supportive at all levels of care. This helped establish a non-judgemental and supportive care setting.
- Support provided to 80 LGBTQ2S+ migrants including the provision of information and supports related to COVID-19, food security, and housing.

- Clinical care provided to 50 individuals, many with multiple complex and untreated physical and mental health needs worsened due to the pandemic.
- Established partnerships with community and institutional partners to support the scale and spread of the initiative.

Methodology

- Hire project coordinator, consultant, and social worker.
- Launch clinic activities including intake and referral forms.
- Affirm partnership with Action LGBTQ for Immigrants and Refugees (AGIR).
- Recruit and train peer navigators and launch outreach activities.
- Begin evaluation activities such as interviews, survey, and data tracking.
- Complete data analysis and launch knowledge mobilization activities.

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“Establishing trust is a major barrier. For many clients, physicians in their country of origin had betrayed their confidences, which may have resulted in police arrests and violence. The peer navigators are critical to building bridges and helping us explain how care works in Canada.”

– Dr. Pierre-Paul Tellier, project collaborator

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Project team

Project lead: Vania Jimenez, MD, CCFP, La Maison Bleue

Ahmed Hamila, PhD, CIUSSS Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Sophia Koukoui, PsyD/PhD, MSc., Department of Psychology, University of Montreal

Edward Lee, PhD, School of Social Work, University of Montreal

Renata Militzer, BSc, Clinique Mauve

Annie Pontbriand, MSc, CIUSSS Centre-Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (Institut Universitaire Sherpa)

Annie Pullen Sansfaçon, PhD, School of Social Work, University of Montreal

Pierre-Paul Tellier, MD, CCFP, FCFP, Department of Family Medicine, McGill University

Yann Zoldan, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University

Partners

AGIR

Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS) Centre Ouest

Clinique des demandeurs d'asile et des réfugiés (CDAR)

Village Santé Family Medicine Group (FMG-U)

- Métro
- de Côte-des-Neiges
- de Parc-Extension

Sherpa Research Centre